

**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES  
STUDENT RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

Thursday, 1 June 2006

Professor Peter Robb (Chair)

Professor Stephen Chan	Mr Guy Craft
Professor Tom Tomlinson	Mr Mushtaq Ahmed
Mr Terry Harvey	Mrs Sue Yates
Mr David Atkins	Mr Frank Debell

Apologies for Absence: Prof Mike Hutt  
Mr Michael Sherry

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 3 November 2005**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2005 were approved.

**2. Matters Arising**

Minute 4.ii It was agreed that all applications which were rejected for Masters courses should be considered by the appropriate Associate Dean to see if the application might be of interest to other areas. In addition all rejections for research should be viewed by the Admissions Staff and brought to the attention of the appropriate Associate Dean if further consideration was considered appropriate.

The Committee also considered it important for regular meeting to be set up with the Associate Dean's to monitor and discuss operational and policy issues for admissions.

**3. Report on Undergraduate Admissions**

The Committee received a report detailing the numbers of applications, offers and acceptances for entry to undergraduate courses for 2006 entry. It was noted that the overall number of application had again increased compared to the previous year and that the number of accepted offers was also higher than at the same time last year. It was agreed however that it would still be prudent to make preparations for Clearing this year as the acceptance rate to some departments was still a little low and to be prepared in case the overall numbers at confirmation were to fall below target.

The admissions office was still holding onto a small number of applications pending consideration of the acceptance rate. It was agreed that given the overall numbers that all late applications still being held should now be rejected.

Overall it was felt that numbers were looking very healthy although it was disappointing that the numbers of overseas students was not higher. It was agreed that

more should be done to encourage students who were currently following the IFCELS Foundation courses both at SOAS and in Beijing to accept offers. Although these students were guaranteed an offer from SOAS many still do not apply and many go on to courses at other UK institutions.

#### **4. Report on Postgraduate Admissions**

The Committee received a report detailing the numbers of applications and offers for entry to postgraduate courses for 2006 entry. It was noted that overall applications were higher than at the same period last year, but that the number of offers made was below that compared to last year. David Atkins reported that there had been delays in processing applications and that there were still a number of applications in the admissions office which were waiting for offers to be made.

With regard to the backlog it was agreed that the processes for dealing with applications and staffing in the admissions office should be reviewed so that in future applications and offers could be processed more effectively.

It was noted that even for courses where premium fees were being introduced the numbers of applications remained healthy. It was agreed that the use of higher course fees should be explored further. However there was a clear need to ensure that this would need to be linked to the provision of more scholarships as a way of encouraging applicants to apply. It was also agreed that it would be helpful, in future, to decide on fee levels earlier in the session so that they could be included in publicity material.

Concern about the cost of living in London and the security issues were highlighted as a concern for the take up rate of offers. There was no evidence that the recent terrorist events had had a significant effect on recruitment.

It was noted that the numbers of applications for the IFCELS course was encouraging, 288 this year compared to 266 in 2005 however the numbers accepting their offers was low 66 compared to 103 in 2005, this was a particular issue for the postgraduate programme. Applications for the undergraduate foundation programme stood at 181 compared to 153 in 2005 but that acceptances were only 33 compared to 53 in 2005. There were however still 61 outstanding offers with no reply and these were being chased.

It was reported that a number of HEI's were reducing their UK foundation programmes and emphasising their offshore courses.

#### **5. Admissions Policy for Applicants Affected by Industrial Action**

It was noted that the on-going industrial action by the AUT would impact on admissions if the threat to boycott examination assessment was carried out on a large scale. A proposal to allow applicants to be admitted pending the publication of their results was considered. It was noted that there were now strong indications that the industrial action would not take place (an announcement was due to be made within the week) however if there were to be any significant problems with results this year then the School should be prepared to accept students as suggested.

## **6. Bloomsbury Consortium**

The Committee considered the draft strategy for international recruitment which had been produced by the Bloomsbury Consortium. Initial concern had been raised by staff in the recruitment office that much of what was being proposed would not greatly enhance the work already being done by the School and that the costs associated with activity through the Consortium would detract from other School recruitment activities. This negative view had been noted by the other consortium members. The Committee agreed that the Bloomsbury Group did offer many opportunities both in terms of the School's recruitment work and in many other areas. It was agreed that it was important that the School be seen to be fully supportive of the work of the Consortium.

## **7. Interviews for Applicants on Access Courses**

The Committee received a paper for the Widening Participation Coordinator which outlined the agreements in place with several local partner institutions.

As part of the Schools Access Agreement it had been agreed to encourage applications from target groups. It was proposed to guarantee interviews for applicants applying from the four partner institutions, City and Islington College, Westminster Kingsway College, Tower Hamlets and Kensington and Chelsea College.

The Committee agreed to the proposal to guarantee interviews to access course students applying from these partner institutions as it was felt that the commitment, between 20 to 30 interviews a year, was not great and that such a move would enhance the motivation for such students.

## **8. UCAS Postgraduate Application and Information Service**

The Committee considered the proposals which had been outlined in the UCAS document. It was agreed that an on-line application system was essential for the School and that this aspect of the UCAS proposal was of particular interest. However it was noted that there were other options available for on-line applications including further development of the Embark system and the development of on-line services through Unit-e. Using systems supported by UCAS would inevitably cost money whereas the use of in house systems could be used to generate income through application fees and deposits.

It was agreed that further consideration should be given to the use of application fees and particularly to the use of deposits for some postgraduate course applications.

It was agreed that all options should be kept open and at this stage and that we should indicate to UCAS that the School would be interested in the proposal.

## **9. Dates for Meetings for Next Session**

The dates for the Committee to meet in 2006/07 were noted.